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MAINE WOODS—BY HOWARD GILES
AWARDED HONORABLE MENTION
ANNUAL EXHIBITION OF AMERICAN PAINTINGS

THE CHINESE EXHIBITION

ALL emanations of ancient Chinese art must be interpreted from the religious conceptions and ideals of the nation. Worship of the great elementary forces of nature, deep reverence for the departed, unlimited devotion to the ancestors and their ethical traditions, an insatiable yearning for salvation and immortality, combined with a sound and practical philosophy of life and moral standards, form the keynote of the mentality of Chinese society. Like that of Egypt, the art of ancient China is one of the dead, and the monuments discovered in the graves bear a distinct relation to the beliefs entertained by the

people in a future life and simultaneously reflect the actual state which their civilization had reached.

The visitor intent on studying the present Chinese exhibits in the Art Institute should be conscious of the fact that in these collections are represented two great periods which are fundamentally distinct and are separated not only by a vast span of time, but are also characterized by diverse social and religious ideas and accordingly by different

means of artistic expression. One is the Han period (206 B. C.—A. D. 220) covering the time around our era and marking the transition from the impersonal art of the archaic epoch to the middle ages; the other is the T'ang period (A. D. 618-906), being China's Augustan age in literature, poetry, painting, and sculpture. The green and brown glazed pottery vases and animals, as well as the rubbings displayed on the walls, are representative of the art of the Han; the clay figures of human beings and animals illustrate artistic achievements of the T'ang.

In the era of the Han, graves were laid out in large sepulchral chambers composed of flat stone slabs. These formed a vault sheltering the coffin and were



QUEENSBORO BRIDGE—BY JOHN F. FOLINSBEE
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decorated with scenes in flat relief depicting favorite incidents of ancient history or mythological subjects in a narrative or almost epic style. Somewhat naive and primitive in the representation of human figures and in the expression of emotions, they are nevertheless full of life in their description of battles, hunting scenes, court processions, royal receptions, and domestic affairs. These engravings in stone come down from the second century A. D. and present our most important archaeological source for the study of ancient Chinese civilization.

The so-called hill-jars symbolize the deep-rooted belief of the ancient Chinese in immortality. They were convinced

of the existence of three Isles of the Blest, supposed to be far off in the eastern ocean, where grew a drug capable of preventing death and securing immortality. Several emperors eager to obtain this precious drug sent out expeditions over sea in quest of the Fortunate Islands, the mysteries of which held the imagination of the people deeply enthralled. To these religious sentiments of their contemporaries the artists of the time lent visual expression by molding mortuary jars of cylindrical form, with covers shaped like the hilly Islands of the Blest emerging from the sea and surrounded by bands of sea-waves. They are posed on three feet molded into

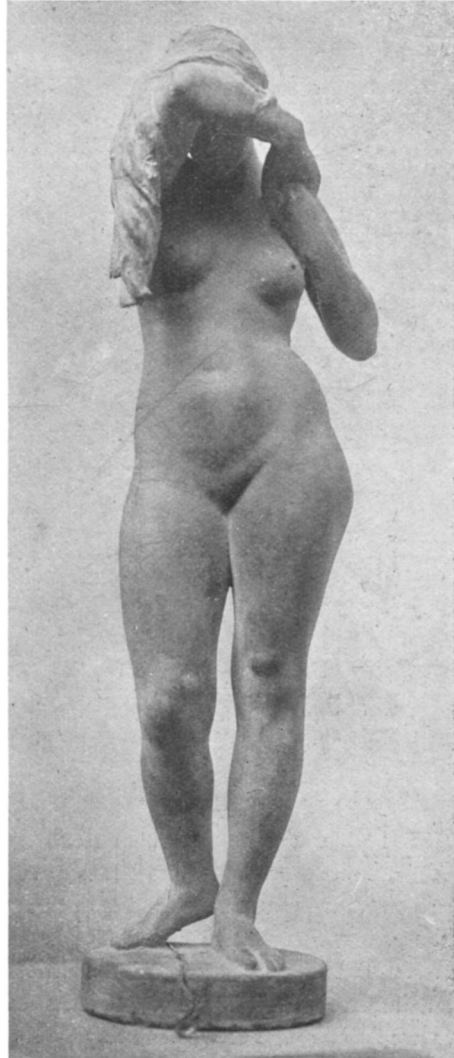


A LITTLE FAIRY—BY RICHARD W. BOCK
AWARDED HONORABLE MENTION, ANNUAL
EXHIBITION OF AMERICAN SCULPTURE

figures of bears, the bear being an emblem of strength and endurance. Such jars were interred in the graves and implied the mourner's wish that his beloved deceased might reach the land of bliss and attain eternal life on the Fortunate

Isles. The meaning of death was to the Chinese a continuation of this life in another sphere. The property dear to the living ones was reproduced in clay and confided to the grave. The likeness of an object suggested a living reality, and the occupant of the tomb was believed to enjoy the durable clay offerings as if they were real things. The spirits of the departed were hence obliged to continue the preparation of their food, and thousands of models of kitchen ranges have been discovered in the graves of the Han period. The green-glazed urns of cylindrical shape with a tiled roof on the top were modeled in imitation of towers which served as granaries, and were filled with cereals to supply the dead with their daily meal. Drink was as necessary to them as food, and jars bearing out the idea of a draw-well were deposited in the grave to furnish a constant supply of fresh water. The roofed well-house contains an opening for the pulley over which the ropes pass for raising or lowering the buckets, and a water-pail is placed on the edge of the well-curb. The large globular vases with two tiger heads on the sides were designed to hold offerings of wine. Some are plain, others are decorated with relief bands displaying hunting scenes with animals in flying gallop and mounted archers aiming at them with cross-bows. These motives are identical with those represented on the rubbings from the contemporaneous tomb-stones. The art of the Han was the great epoch of Chinese idealism expressive of religious ideas and sentiments, faith, hope, and resurrection, in a forceful, straightforward way.

The leading ideas of the great T'ang epoch move along somewhat different lines. In pictorial art realism and naturalism prevail; in sculpture, thanks to the beneficial influence of Buddhism and Hellenistic-Indian traditions, the human figure predominates. In the burial clay figurines of this memorable period we meet a surprisingly personal and human element, which eloquently speaks its own language and testifies to a highly developed individualism as well as to a noble refinement of social customs. The feminine ideal of that epoch is portrayed in numerous graceful statuettes with a large variety of style in costume and hair-dressing, varying according to local usage. The coffin in the grave was flanked at both ends by male or female attendants on horseback. Powerful knights clad in iron armor protected the lord from demons or malignant intruders whose avarice might have disturbed the peace of his burial place. Yama, the Indian god of death, was a favorite conception of the people of the T'ang period. He usually stands over a demon or a reclining bull which is his emblem and appears as a mighty warrior with heavy armor and plumed helmet—an efficient guardian of the grave. Bull-carts were employed to carry the coffin and paraphernalia at the funeral to the burial place, and the bull was modeled with a high degree of realism. The lover of horses had his favorite steeds immortalized in clay. Often they were pictured as if mourning for their deceased masters. The camel loaded with merchandise, emblematic of commerce, adorned the grave of the merchants who carried on a lucrative trade



EVE—BY GEORG LOBER
AWARDED HONORABLE MENTION, ANNUAL
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with Central Asia and Persia. Figures of actors and dwarfs took care of the entertainment of the dead, dwarfs being noted in China for their wit and sagacity and being frequently employed as jesters and court fools. BERTHOLD LAUFER.